

The Ballarat Naturalist

Volume 25 No.10

November 2025



"Six Peaks Speak: Unsettling Legacies in Southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country"

**A Summary of his presentation on 3 Oct 2025, on the book
by Barry Golding and Clive Willman**

The term 'unsettling' in the title was used deliberately, to challenge the false assumptions and attitudes in historical sources about the benign nature of European 'settling', 'discovery', 'exploration' and 'pioneering' of the land: when in fact for 10s of 1000s of years before Europeans arrived, the continent had already been comprehensively explored, settled, named and cultured. Barry mentioned that he personally experiences the notion of 'settlement' in the context of colonization and copious evidence of attempted genocide in Australia - as upsetting, disturbing and discomposing.

The book *Six Peaks Speak* upends the comfortable and conventional idea of 'settling', instead using 'unsettling' as one of its key organising principles.

Barry's more recent research for the book was enabled by a Fellowship to study historical materials through the State Library of Victoria in 2023-24. However, many ideas for the book arose through Barry's personal interests in Indigenous cultures, and his extensive mapping as a teenager of sites of 'oven mounds' (evidence of pre-European settlement) across Central Victoria, where he has lived for 46 years.

Oven mounds mapped in Donald Shire by Barry as a teenager in the 1960s.



Barry remarked that most Australians know the term 'Hangi' from New Zealand, yet few realise that extensive evidence of similar oven structures can be found scattered across the Australian landscape. It is astounding that only a small fraction of these important historic sites are registered (or even known by locals or 'landowners').

Six Peaks Speak adopts a multidisciplinary approach to tell the story of just six modest mountains in Victoria (out of 22 000 named peaks in Australia) from deep geological time to the present. While the peaks selected are today called mounts **Kooroocheang, Beckworth, Greenock, Tarrengower, Alexander** and **Franklin**, each has a fascinating but rarely considered First Nations back-story. Written with co-author and geologist Clive Willman, the book sought to answer the question, 'How can we help future generations deal with the unsettling legacies of what has happened on the land and its mountains?'

The intention in this talk was to:

- Introduce six mountains on **southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country**.
- Focus on the three peaks nearby: *Nyaninuk* / Mt Beckworth, also *Lalkambuk* / Mt Franklin & *Gurutjanga* / Mt Kooroocheang.
- Tease out some stories and legacy themes associated with these mountains.
- Answer audience questions.

The focus on mountains and hills arises from the fact that the geology of these peaks is hugely influential in determining the nature of local culture and clans, and in their way of life, such as the type of stones used as heat beads in the ovens they used for cooking their food.

Six selected peaks and their characteristics
Ordered by height, with number of 'visible peaks' & geology

■ Alexander / <u>Liyanganuk</u> 744m (267)	■ Granite
■ Kooroocheang / <u>Gurutjanga</u> 669m (189)	■ Volcanic cone
■ Beckworth / <u>Nyaninuk</u> 629m (180)	■ Granite
■ Franklin / <u>Lalkambuk</u> 627m (173)	■ Volcanic cone
■ Tarrengower / <u>Dharrang Gauwa</u> 571m (193)	■ Hornfels & Granite
■ Greenock 385m (105) [c/f Aoraki 3,724m]	■ Volcanic cone
■ 300 named peaks in <u>Djaara Country</u>	
■ 30,000 named peaks in Australia	



Mt Kooroocheang / Gurutjanga
A volcanic cone 10 km north of Kingston)



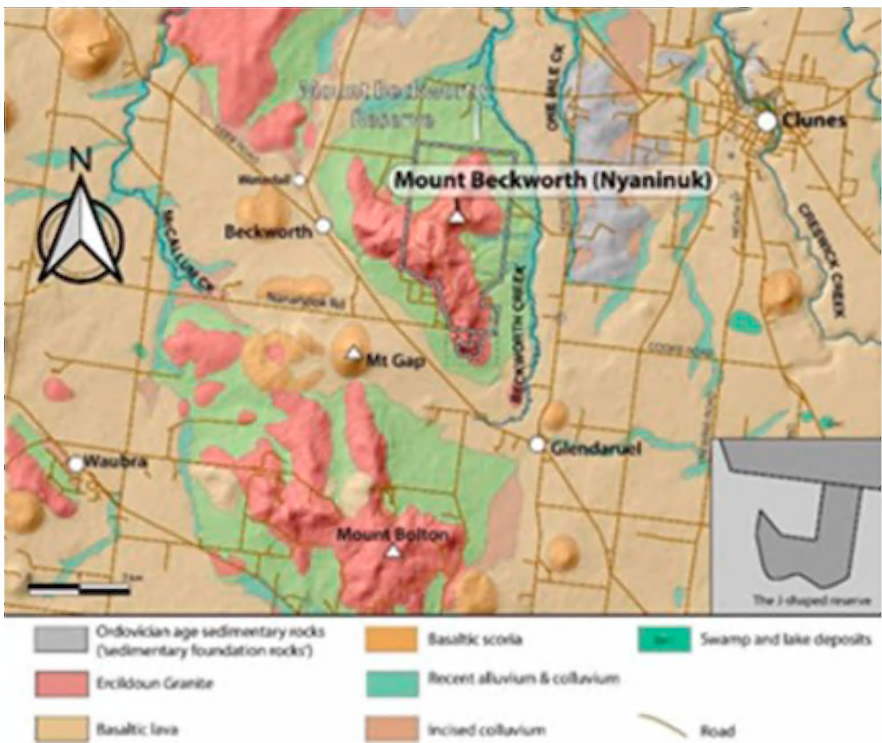
Example of oven mounds near Mt Kooroocheang

Some main conclusions from the research

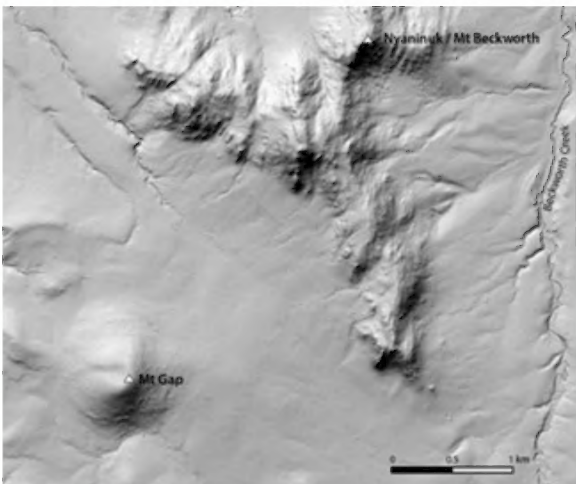
- *It's time for Truth Telling.*
- Australia was settled, named and cultured by First Peoples for at least 3 000 generations.
- To call what occurred on contact everywhere in Australia 'settling' (discovery/ pioneering) is dishonest.
- Such 'settling' was made possible by violent unsettlement.

- First People's resistance was met by deadly force.
- What occurred in Dja Dja Wurrung Country and on countless frontiers in Australia, including by the action of squatters, amounted to genocide.
- Barry states: I have always felt uncomfortable living on Country 'unsettled', by deadly force.

The figures below show Mt Beckworth (or Nyaninuk) which is well known to Field Naturalists. Barry's research from State Records Office showed various discrepancies in the boundaries of 'reserves' and dates of enactment of reservation by sand quarry and other land users. Reserves were invariably simply areas designated as 'commons' for keeping livestock in mining areas.



Map of 'Nyaninuk' (Mt Beckworth) area near Clunes



Lidar imaging was used to help understand history of past land disturbance around Nyaninuk' (Mt Beckworth)

While we as field naturalists are aware of some of the findings, the book has a wealth of other information relevant to our understanding of the history of areas that we visit and enjoy. It seems important that members learn about identification of oven mounds, and perhaps help record their location and extent in areas that we visit.

Overall new findings from the research

- Most pre-contact First Nations sites and many post-contact sites in Victoria have never been formally recorded.
- Urgent investigation of other oven mound clusters north and east of *Liyanganuk* / Mt Alexander & in the Ballan area on Wadawurrung & Woiwurrung Country.
- Two areas in southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country should be managed as significant cultural landscapes: *Lalkambuk* and *Gurutjanga*.
- Acknowledgement of genocide with unsettling.
- Opportunities for similar interpretation on all 22 000 Australian peaks.
- Understanding what is written in the landscape (and erased from it) is a prerequisite for responsible earth stewardship.

A vision for the future

Barry's vision is for International Mountain Day, 11 December each year, to become an important day for communities in Australia - for people to gather, celebrate and engage in truth and storytelling with First Peoples about special hills and mountains. In line with this vision, a series of 6 **interpretive walks** are planned. In early Dec 2025, the Great Dividing Trail Association (GDTA) is organising six interpretive walks to the summits of six diverse and special mountains in Victorian's Central Highlands, within three adjoining First Nations in boundaries. Details and registration for the six GDTA's planned for Dec 2025 can be found on the 'events page of the GDTA website [<https://www.gdt.org.au/news-and-events>].

*For those interested in reading *Six Peaks Speak*, copies of the book can be ordered by email from b.golding@federation.edu.au at the authors price of \$55 in soft cover or \$89 in hardcover (add \$10 if required for postal delivery within Australia).*

Many thanks to Hon Professor Barry Golding AM, Federation University, for his excellent presentation.

[Summary - John Petheram]

Excerpts from the FNCB Club Meeting Minutes held 7.30pm, October 3rd, 2025 in person and via Zoom

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: President Neville Oddie welcomed 26 members and 4 visitors attending in person and six members attending via Zoom.

Apologies: Stuart Porteous, Hilda Gregory and Margaret Rich.

Guest Speaker: Hon. Professor Barry Golding AM presented “Six Peaks Speak: Unsettling legacies in southern Dja Dja Wurrung Country”, focusing on three of the six peaks in his study/ book. John Petheram kindly volunteered to write-up the presentation for the newsletter.

Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on September 5th

- Discussed concerns regarding the government’s use of vague language (“as soon as practicable”) in their response to the Club submission calling for the urgent legislation of Central West Parks as per the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council’s recommendations (2019). Emily highlighted the importance of club members following up and applying pressure on the government about the upgrading of reservation status for smaller reserves as these are still significant.
- The Second Circular for the SEANA Spring Camp has now been sent to all registrants and SEANA-affiliated Club secretaries.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

- The City of Ballarat’s “Ballarat Friends Forum” will take place tomorrow. Judith Bailey has kindly offered to represent FNCB. If anyone wishes to assist Judith please get in touch.
- Discussed the requirement to set up a myCAV online account for FNCB – Emily mentioned that she had received an email about this earlier in the week. She noted that reporting requirements were transferred from Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) approximately five years ago, and as such, she hasn’t had to supply any information to CAV recently. However, since the club now needs to create a myCAV account, she plans to make contact next week to find out how to proceed.
- Great Southern BioBlitz 2025 runs from Friday 24th to Monday 27th October, and Vireya has kindly set up a project in iNaturalist for the Ballarat area. It will automatically capture and collate any photos we take of living things within the Ballarat area over those four days and upload to iNaturalist. Anyone who wishes to participate can

contact Emily or Vireya for more information. Neville thanked Vireya for getting our Club registered and set-up for the event.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report:

Opening bal. as at Sep. 5, 2025: \$20,756.89
Income \$968.35
Expenses: \$857.29
Closing bal.: \$20,867.95

Treasurer's DBB Income/Expenses Report: 774 copies sold,
194 copies on hand (the rest in outlets like Collins Booksellers).

Total Income: \$11,308.00 Total Expenses: \$6,118.75
Current Profit: \$5,189.25

SEANA Spring Camp Income/ Expenses Report

Total Income: \$9,367.00 Total Expenses: \$928.00
Current Position: \$8,439.00

Motion: That the Treasurer's Reports be accepted & the three tabled invoices (for Chester Printers x 2 months: \$69.00, Val Hocking's reimbursement for guest speaker gift \$17.75 and SEANA Camp Catering on Oct. 17 by Wattleseed Café: \$1,577.00 be approved for payment.

Moved: K. Elder **Seconded:** S. Faull **Carried.**

General Business

Whilst we didn't schedule a field trip this weekend to give us time to do any last-minute planning/ scoping, etc. for SEANA Spring Camp on Oct. 17-19, you are welcome to join Andy Arnold tomorrow Saturday 4th October for the morning, afternoon or whole day between 9am–4.30pm. Andy will undertake a practice run of his "Lal Lal – Bungal Historic Area and Lal Lal Falls Reserve" half-day excursion in the morning, then the Dereel Rokewood area in the afternoon

SEANA Spring Camp planning: volunteer rosters, etc.

Kathy: We have closed registrations for dinners because the meals have now been ordered. However, people can still pay \$30 to register, and come on excursions or come to hear the guest speakers after dinner.

Neville: Much of the ground work has now been done in terms of venues, guest speakers, meals, excursions, registrations, etc. The main thing now is having volunteers from our membership to assist

with particular tasks throughout this major event for our Club.

Kathy: Max has prepared some excellent documents outlining the duties and expectations for excursion leaders and facilitators. Kathy plans to email these out to relevant people tomorrow, so you have them for reference, and she also brought printed copies to tonight's meeting. She also thanked Peter Dalman, who has kindly volunteered to act as our "Incident Controller" — he will be our designated point of contact in the event of any incidents.

The SEANA Camp Sub-committee has compiled a list of tasks where volunteer support is needed. Kathy read through the various tasks and the approximate times they'll be required to be in action. This document will be circulated at the end of the meeting — if you're able to help out, please add your name tonight or contact Emily via email.

Kathy will email leaders and facilitators shortly. She has started working on an information sheet that will be provided to all participants upon sign-up. It includes a detailed map showing designated meeting points for those not departing from Pax Hill. Whilst she has completed some of these, there are still several excursions where she doesn't yet have the meeting location - she'll be following up with leaders individually to confirm those details. It is important for someone to be at Pax Hill who is fully across the plan and can ensure participants are heading off in the right direction — will need to decide whether this will be the leader or whether leaders will nominate someone to take on this role on their behalf. All final decision-making will occur on Friday night. Car-pooling — will be organised on the Friday when people register.

- **SEANA General Meeting:** 5pm on Saturday 18th October at Ballarat Golf Club.

Neville advised that, to his understanding, one of the Agenda items for the upcoming SEANA General Meeting may involve proposed changes to SEANA's rules. While the amendments appear to be minor, the updated rules have been circulated to members via an email from Emily that contained several SEANA-related documents. Neville noted that a vote on these changes should not proceed unless members have had sufficient time to review and consider them. He encouraged anyone who has concerns, or who wishes to review the rules before the meeting, to contact him directly. He indicated he would then raise the matter at the SEANA Meeting, explaining that members have not had adequate time to properly consider the changes and as such that due process has not been followed. In that

case, the Club may need to abstain from voting or request an adjournment.

Regardless of whether he receives specific feedback from members, Neville stated he would still raise the issue at the meeting. As the meeting is not an AGM, he believes deferring the decision could be a reasonable outcome.

- **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture**: Friday 7th November at 7.30pm. **Important Notice**: Different venue: Ballarat North Community Centre, 702 Walker St, Ballarat North. Please come early (any time from 6.30pm) to help set-up the room for our biggest event of the year and meet and greet visitors. Please bring flowers in vases to decorate the room and a plate of supper to share if you can. Emily is working on the promotional flyer with Pete.

- **Write-ups for the newsletter**: Sheree has led the development of a new template to assist members in writing-up a guest speaker presentation for the Club's newsletter. It details the key elements to try and record. The Club is in need of more members to contribute by recording guest speaker talks for the newsletter. In response, the Committee is actively working on solutions — like this template — to support and encourage members to get involved.

Peter Dalman: The *Australian Plants Society: Ballarat District* is hosting its annual Spring Native Plant & Flower Show on the Saturday during SEANA, 18th October from 9am-4pm in the Robert Clark Horticultural Centre at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. If you know people who may like to attend, please grab a pamphlet or two tonight. We will also have some pamphlets at the SEANA registration desk for those who might be interested to visit during the Camp.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

Andy:

1. Andy recently received an intriguing mud-nest from a neighbour, who also described some insect activity associated with it. Based on his observations, the nest appears to belong either to a Covered-cell Mud-dauber Wasp or an Australian “hornet”. However, Andy is more inclined to believe it's a Covered-cell Dauber *Sceliphron laetum* given the presence of multiple exit points in the nest. Notably, there is also an unmerged wasp visible on the side of the nest. Andy would welcome any feedback from those familiar with these species. He also discovered that the nest may involve two different species as there is evidence of where a smaller nest had once been.

2. At the end of August, Andy attended his sister-in-law's 80th birthday celebration. Her unique idea — inspired by her passion for sailing large ships — was to mark the occasion with a whale-watching cruise in Hervey Bay. They set out on the water for the experience. Andy shared that he was absolutely amazed by what they saw, and presented stunning slides of Humpback Whales. His photos captured a variety of details, including the tail fluke, the ventral (underside) and dorsal (upper side) of the tail, the blowhole, and different views of the head.

The images beautifully showcased the whales' features from various angles — with close-up details of the tail, barnacles, and other marine organisms such as callosities that often attach themselves to the whale's head or rostrum. It was a memorable and visually captivating experience.



Claire: Claire provided an update on the Masked Lapwings in her front yard at Miner's Rest. Having already hatched three chicks, none of which seemed to survive for very long, today they were out there again on the same spot making the same noise and they've made another shallow depression, so it looks like they're going to nest again. This is quite exciting and interesting as it is occurring several days earlier than in years previous.

Neville: Neville explained how he was down at "Tiverton", a predator-exclusion fenced property in Dundonell near Darlington, taking cuttings of some Silver Banksias for the Friends of the Forgotten Woodlands project. Here, he heard that people had been trapping within the fenced area as part of a monitoring project for endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoots. Overnight, they had managed to trap and band 56 Eastern Barred Bandicoots and three endangered Eastern Quolls. Apparently, they'd been having lots of trouble with domestic rats, but no longer have any trouble and are wondering if the Eastern Quolls are responsible for that.

Kathy: Kathy showed a very handsome case, bequeathed to her from Les Hanrahan after his term as Club treasurer. Kathy asked if anyone knew the origin of this wonderful case or if they have any

interest in re-homing it. She is happy to gift the case to anyone who would like it. Whilst cleaning out the case she found a first edition of the “Discovering Ballarat’s Bushland” book and a CD on Lake Wendouree that apparently isn’t compatible with modern technology.

Next Meeting: Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture: to be presented by FNCB Life Member Roger Thomas. Please consider volunteering to write-up this fascinating presentation for the newsletter.

There will be no general Club Meeting on this night.

When? Friday 7th November 2025, 7.30pm in person (or from 6.30pm to help set-up) at the Ballarat North Community Centre, 702 Walker St, Ballarat North

Our next club meeting

The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture: “41 years of Nature Notes” to be presented by FNCB Life Member Roger Thomas at Ballarat North Community Centre. 702 Walker St North Ballarat

We thank Sue Grey– Smith for offering to write up Roger’s presentation for our Newsletter

November Field Trip Sunday 9th Nov leaving 9.30 am from Fed Uni car park Gillies St

-The field trip will be to “Clunes bushland”, to be led by Roger Thomas. Carpool or convoy. We will meet some members at the former Clunes Town Hall in Bailey Street at 10.00am. Toilets are opposite. This will also be the afternoon meeting place, at 1.30pm *Refer beforehand to Site 35 on p 59 of our Ballarat’s Bushland book for useful information.*

Roger will give a brief summary of the day’s activities before we leave Clunes in convoy along the Maryborough Road for just over 7 km before turning left at the sign “Fells Track”

The rare Scented Bush-pea (*P. graveolens*) is just starting to open, so we are hoping to see this shrub in bloom, also Pussy-tails (*Ptilotus spathulatus*), as well as Pale Vanilla-lily, Sticky Everlasting and many more.

We need a volunteer to write notes for the Newsletter please.

- contact Emily if you can assist.

Meetings and Excursions

Fri 7th Nov Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture: Roger Thomas
Nature Notes Retrospective

**Venue Ballarat North Community Centre 702 Walker St
Ballarat North**

Sun 9th Nov Clunes Block and small reserves,
Leader: Roger Thomas

Future events

Fri Dec 5th Neville Oddie *Chepstowe*

Sun Dec 7th 1.30 pm Christmas break-up: Chepstowe
Leader Neville Oddie

*Volunteers are needed to write up these events for our newsletter
please.*

Next Committee meeting Thur 27th Nov at 7.30 pm on Zoom

**Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at
7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of
Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),**

Committee:

President	Neville Oddie
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold
	Val Hocking
	Sheree Cartledge
	Max Thompson
	Alasdair Wardle
	Sue Grey-Smith

Correspondence: PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350

Email: Secretary:- Emily Noble

Editor: Val Hocking

Treasurer Kathy Elder

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

A monthly publication of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc.
Incorporation # A0014919P ABN 13 150 403 135